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An affiliate of the
National Education Association

Testimony of

Donald Williams, Jr.

Connecticut Education Association

Before the Education Committee

SB 176 AAC the Smart Start Program

February 24, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Donald E. Williams, Jr., Director of Policy, Research, and Reform for the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents 43,000 active and retired teachers across the state.

I am testifying today in support of **SB 176 AAC the Smart Start Program**.

Senate Bill 176 concerns legislation that we have strongly supported—the Smart Start Program which expands access to high quality pre-school education for all children. We are particularly supportive of the commitment to high quality in Smart Start—certified educators and accredited programs are required, together with collaboration between pre-school programs and the local public schools and boards of education to ensure that such early childhood programs prepare children for school.

We note that in the final paragraph of SB 176, there is new language that requires a pre-school program to commence “on the same day as the first day of the regular school year for kindergarten.” For the purposes of local flexibility, we would recommend that the language be amended to say, “on or before the same day as the first day of the regular school year...” This would ensure that such programs are open when the school year begins, but also allow for the programs to commence earlier if preferred.

Thank you.